

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	Biological Sciences
Subject(s):	
Programme(s) / Module(s):	MSc Bioscience MSc Plant Science and Biotechnology
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	MSc

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Quality Assurance**
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards**Matters for Urgent Attention**

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The courses provide Masters-level training of a very high standard. The programme is effective and delivery is first-class. The standards are entirely appropriate for a course of this type.

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

The two courses are broadly similar in overall scope to other UK courses in this subject area but these courses are distinctive because of (i) the high level of practical work, which is extremely impressive and (ii) the unusually hands-on management. The staff provide unusually effective supervision of the entire course from arrival to departure.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

The assessment methods are effective, comprising a mix of coursework, examinations and individual research project. The assessment procedures are geared to the type of module being taught and overall are fair and effective

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

The students are very good; I was given the opportunity to talk to them at an initial meeting (for poster presentations) and I read their coursework and projects. I was impressed by the abilities of the student cohort.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

A few minor details have been changed in the Plant course and these appear to have been effective. This was my first year as examiner of the MSc Biosciences course so I cannot comment.

The main area of good practice is the input and enthusiasm of the academic staff and administrators that oversee the programmes; I would judge that management is unusually effective because of the high level of engagement

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

The subject areas mirror some of the research areas in the departments involved, and individual research projects are carried out together with members of academic staff. This is to be expected.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

The Examination/Assessment Process

- 10. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.**

Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

The material is readily available and sufficient

- 11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?**

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

The information was clearly explained

- 12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?**

I was given access to all coursework, exam answers and projects. There were no areas for concern.

- 13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?**

As indicated above, all of the students' work was provided, and the scripts were clearly annotated

- 14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?**

The subject matter was appropriate, covering a wide range of biological research areas and incorporating laboratory and 'dry' methods.

- 15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?**

I attended the exam board and this was conducted in a very professional manner

- 16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**

Yes. The staff explained their procedures for dealing with mitigating circumstances and other issues, and there were no cases for concern

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

This is a very well designed and run set of courses. In many senses the courses are at the forefront of good practice

Faculty of Biological Sciences
Student Education Service

Student Education Office
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University of Leeds
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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

20th December 2016

Dear

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2015/16

MSc Bioscience

MSc Plant Science and Biotechnology

Thank you for your supportive comments on the courses. I am glad that we have been able to improve the level of annotation on the scripts since your comments of previous years. We are grateful to you for taking on the MSc Bioscience this year. We appreciate that acting as External Examiner is an additional call on your time and we are grateful for your input.

Yours sincerely,

Programme Leader

Tel: 0113

Email: